Plea against character assassination of judges

LAHORE: A petition was filed on Monday in the Lahore High Court (LHC) challenging an alleged character assassination campaign on social media against judges of the superior judiciary.

Petitioner Pervez Elahi, a lawyer by profession, stated that a character assassination campaign was being carried out on social media against female judges of the LHC for several weeks.

He alleged that pro-government social media accounts were involved in the campaign against the judges based on 'fake' complaints filed with the Supreme Judicial Council.

He stated that the federal government and the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) remained silent regarding the social media campaign against the judges, which raised serious questions.

The petitioner sought directions for continuous monitoring of derogatory content against the judges on social media and its immediate removal.

He also sought orders for the registration of criminal cases against the social media accounts involved in the malicious campaign.

Besides NCCIA, Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, Punjab police, ministry of interior, Punjab Bar Council and Pakistan Bar Council have been made respondents in the petition filed through Advocate Mian Dawood. Justice Ali Zia Bajwa would take up the petition on Tuesday (today). — **Staff Reporter**

Perpetual arrest warrants out for Khadija, others

LAHORE: An anti-terrorism court on Monday declared four accused, including fashion designer Khadija Shah, as proclaimed offenders in a May 9 case of Askari Tower attack and issued perpetual warrants for their arrest.

ATC-I Judge Manzer Ali Gill passed the order against the accused for deliberately absconding in the trial proceedings of the case.

The prosecution filed an application requesting the court to declare Ms Shah, Hamza Sohail, Usman Aslam and Ahmad Mursaleen POs following their non appearance in the hearing.

It said Ms Shah went into hiding after she was awarded a jail term in another case of May 9 attacks.

It said the accused persons failed to join the proceedings despite issuance of their arrest warrants.

Last week, Khadija Shah and five other accused persons were also declared POs in the Jinnah House attack case for avoiding the court proceedings against them.

An anti-terrorism court had sentenced Khadija Shah, a granddaughter of former army chief Asif Nawaz Janjua, to five-year imprisonment in a case of torching a Supreme Court judge's squad vehicle near Jinnah House during the May 9 riots. — Staff Reporter

Lahore's air quality improves despite less rain, govt claims

LAHORE: Lahore recorded a consistent improvement in its Air Quality Index (AQI) in 2026 compared to 2025 despite below average rainfall and dry weather conditions during the current season, the Punjab government claimed, relying on an analytical report on Monday.

According to a report of the Environment Protection and Climate Change Department, Lahore recorded consistent improvement in its AQI in 2026, compared to 2025. It notes that the city's overall AQI improved by 58 points from October 2025 to Jan 10, 2026, reflecting a positive shift in environmental trends. Out of 102 days during the 2025-26, air quality remained better for 60 days, with overall improvement of 20pc.

The report shows month-wise progress, with AQI improving by eight points in October, 192 points in November and 13 points in December. In January, during the first 10 days alone, the AQI showed an improvement of 28 points compared to the same period last year. — **Staff Reporter**

LAHORE: People sit around the fire amid dense fog. — White Star / M. Arif

Discos resort to forced loadshedding as shortfall surges to 4,000MW

By Khalid Hasnain

LAHORE: The power distribution companies (Discos) have started forced loadshedding across the country after the electricity shortfall surged to nearly 4,000 Megawatts, including 1,000MWs in the Lahore Electric Supply Company (Lesco) alone, comprising five districts.

According to official sources, the situation has been persisting for the last many days due to dense fog causing repeated tripping of various power plants in the southern region, while the hydel power generation remains negligible in the ongoing winter.

"When we compare the situation with the previous year's, the electricity demand has increased by approximately 2,000 MW during the winter, owing to the extensive use of heating appliances," the official, who requested anonymity, explained while talking to Dawn on Monday. In addition, he said, the reduction in the gas supply to Lahore-based power plants, along with the closure of one unit at the Sahiwal Coal Power Plant, has further constrained the generation capacity, leaving Discos with no option but to resort to loadshedding in Punjab, Sindh and other provinces.

According to another official source, the situation has worsened over the last 4-5 days after a couple of power plants in the southern region went off grid due to the tripping caused by dense fog. "From these plants, the Matiari-Lahore High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) transmission line supplies power to Punjab, especially Lahore," he maintained, adding that the situation is expected to improve in the coming days as the work is underway to restore these plants.

On the other hand, the consumers are suffering because of the hours-long forced loadshedding — three to six hours in the urban areas and six to 10 hours in rural areas of Punjab, Sindh and other provinces.

"In Sukkur city, forced loadshedding has been continuing for three to five hours daily. But the rural areas, especially in the interior Sindh, are facing eight to twelve hours loadshedding on a daily basis these days," a Sukkur-based consumer told *Dawn*.

According to a Lahore-based consumer, the forced loadshedding is being observed for three to six hours on a daily basis in the city these days. "For the last couple of days, we are also experiencing shortage of water supply from the Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa), due to the non-operation of tube-wells because of the loadshedding. This has also resulted in unavailability of warm water in this chilly weather," he complained, asking the government to intervene and ensure uninterrupted electricity and gas supply.

Meanwhile, Lesco also continued observing forced loadshedding for hours in Punjab capital and the adjoining districts following a shortfall of over 1,100MW in its total consumption of over 3,200MW in peak hours.

Since the power shortfall has emerged due to lesser allocation from the national grid, Lesco Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Ramzan Butt says the company has no option but to go for loadshedding in such a situation.

"At present, the hydel power generation is zero. Meanwhile,the consumers earlier using the solar net-metering system, have also returned to the Lesco's system due to non-generation by their solar power equipment because of the dense fog. Moreover, we have no supply from those selling solar power to us through net metering. Likewise, various power plants went off the grid due to tripping caused by the harsh foggy weather," he explained.

"This all led to power shortfall in our total consumption," he added.

The Lesco CEO said that at 7:45pm (Monday), the total demand of Lesco, which covers Lahore city district and the districts of Kasur, Okara, Sheikhupura and Nankana Sahib, was 3,241MW, whereas the supplies from the national grid was 2,160MW, resulting in a shortfall of almost 1,100MW.

Forensic evidence

Azma sees KP CM's disqualification

LAHORE: Punjab Information and Culture Minister Azma Bokhari has said that Kyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi is likely to be disqualified in the case related to attack on the Radio Pakistan, Peshawar.

"Forensic evidence has confirmed that Sohail Afridi and other KP leadership including Kamran Bangash, Taimur Jhagra, Irfan Saleem, and ISF's Aamir Chamkani were directly involved in the attack on Radio Pakistan, arson, and the destruction of public property. Their identities have been established by matching faces in the videos with their official and public profile photographs. A case is currently under trial in a court in Peshawar and based on evidence a possible disqualification is expected against these suspects," Bokhari told a presser here on Monday.

The KP CM recently visited Sindh and Punjab to mobilise party workers for the street movement against the government as the main show across the country would be held on Feb 8 to mark the two years of what it called its `stolen mandate.'

Azma Bokhari further said that independent investigation conducted by the Punjab Forensic Science Laboratory had conclusively proven that the May 9, 2023, attack on Radio Pakistan Peshawar was a well-organised and premeditated operation, with the direct involvement of several PTI leaders.

According to the forensic report, she said that audio and video footages were analysed frame by frame, and all evidence documented and submitted before the court.

She explained that these investigations were carried out under the directives of the Anti-Terrorism Court, which had ordered the police to submit a complete report in the Radio Pakistan attack case.

"Sixteen videos obtained from Peshawar were forensically examined, and no evidence of editing or tampering was found, confirming their authenticity," she said.

On the other hand,several PTI leaders stated that these clips didn't show the Radio Pakistan occurrence, which took place on May 10, 2023, after PTI founder Imran Khan was arrested in Islamabad.

Speaking on the PTI's call for a wheel-jam strike on Feb 8, Bokhari said they planned a "new programme of anarchy to subjugate the state and make the law subservient to them, which cannot be made possible".

She said the PTI's politics had consistently revolved around unrest, violence, and vandalism, and even during its time in power, the party's performance remained negligible.

Bokhari said during KP CM Sohail Afridi's visit, PTI workers resorted to damaging vehicles, clearly reflecting their disruptive mindset.

"The state cannot allow any political party or group to damage national institutions, public assets, or the country's dignity," she said and made it clear the events of May 9 would never be forgotten and that all responsible individuals would be held accountable under the law.

"The state will not bow before false narratives, political theatrics or chaos and will ensure protection of citizens' lives and property, respect for state institutions, and the supremacy of law at all costs."

Azma Bokhari recalled that PTI founder Imran Khan himself had claimed he would apologise if vandalism was proven through forensic evidence, yet despite clear proof, no remorse or apology had been made so far.

Ms Bokhari further said individuals initially blamed on intelligence agencies were later identified as PTI workers, many of them were in jail. "Several people were seen on camera confessing to arson and property damage, while audio recordings of Murad Saeed are also available, in which he can be heard issuing direct instructions," she said. — ***ZULQERNAIN TAHIR***

Cutting of trees on Canal Road

LHC satisfied with action taken against PHA officials

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court on Monday expressed satisfaction over a report of the Parks Horticulture Authority (PHA) about the action taken against its officials responsible for cutting of trees on Canal Road.

Justice Shahid Karim was hearing multiple petitions filed against the government's failure to take effective measures to control smog and other environmental issues.

PHA's counsel Barrister Haris Azmat presented a report before the court stating that the officials, including a BS-19 officer, had been suspended for cutting grownup branches of trees on Canal Road. He said departmental proceedings had also been initiated against these officials.

The judge expressed satisfaction over the report and directed that the PHA director general be informed that no tree shall be cut in the city without his permission.

Justice Karim further directed the PHA to carry out an assessment before cutting any tree in order to determine the possibility of saving the tree or branches.

The PHA counsel stated that the tree branches were trimmed to avoid accidents on Canal Road.

The judge expressed surprise, observing that no accident had ever occurred due to tree branches in the past.

The counsel further stated that steps were being taken to have parks adopted by affluent individuals or companies. He said a meeting in this regard was scheduled for Jan 14.

The judge directed the PHA to submit a detailed report regarding restoration of Nasser Bagh.

He adjourned further hearing of the petitions till Jan 16.

PHA imposes ban on tree cutting, pruning in city district

Move comes after LHC warned authority officers of cases

By Khalid Hasnain

LAHORE: After taking disciplinary action against its four officers recently, the Parks & Horticulture Authority (PHA) on Monday imposed a complete ban on trimming/felling of trees in the Lahore city district and directed the officers concerned to ensure compliance of the orders.

The decision was made following remarks of the Lahore High Court on Friday wherein it warned of cases against the PHA officials responsible for cutting down trees reportedly on Canal Road last week. The court also expressed its displeasure at PHA for not imposing a ban on tree cutting.

According to a notification, the ban will be effective with immediate effect following orders of PHA Managing Director Raja Mansoor Ahmed.

The notification states that the unauthorised cutting down of any tree has been prohibited. It further states that even minor cutting of branches, trimming or pruning of trees shall not be carried out without prior written approval of the competent authority, regardless of whether the purpose is clearance of electric lines, safety measures or aesthetic maintenance. It directs all directors, project directors and in-charge officers of the PHA to exercise enhanced vigilance within their respective jurisdictions.

The notification further emphasises that the protection of trees is essential for environmental conservation and promotion of urban greenery.

"Any violation of these instructions will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations," the notification warns.

On Friday last, the PHA withdrew the additional charge of Canal Project from the director and suspended three others for cutting a fully grown branch of a tree along the Canal Road near the Doctors` Hospital Underpass instead of trimming it, inviting public criticism. The action was taken following an inquiry report against the officers, including the director (horticulture).

It is pertinent to mention that Lahore had already witnessed loss of thousands of trees in the recent past due to various infrastructure development projects. The city lost over 2,100 trees due to three major projects – Rs2bn Signal-Free Corridor Project (from Liberty Roundabout to Shadman via Jail Road), over Rs160bn Lahore Orange Line Metro Train Project and about Rs1.5bn Canal Road Widening Project. Moreover, uprooting of about 1,300 trees was also carried out for the Canal Road widening project in the past. Additionally, 120 trees were cut down for the Link Canal Road from the Punjab University land to Kareem Block.

Lahore Canal Road (24km long stretch) is a major urban green corridor in the country having a huge number of grown trees. In July last year, the National Engineering Services Pakistan (Nespak) completed the first large-scale digital mapping of this urban green cover. The geotagging survey of the Lahore Canal Road (from Jinnah Bus Terminal, Thokar, to Harbanspura underpass) had been completed on the orders of the Lahore High Court in connection with the proposed Yellow Line Metro project under which, nearly 1,400 mature trees are to be be cut down to create space for the dedicated metro line. At this, the court had warned that no tree felling could be conceived in the feasibility report since it was prohibited under a number of orders passed by the court. The court also ordered the Punjab's Environment Protection Agency (EPA) not to consider the environment impact assessment (EIA) report of such projects unless it was prepared by an independent consultant having international repute.

During the survey, the geotagging of 27,950 trees was completed along the 24km long stretch of the Canal Road. Each tree's species, height, girth, age and condition was recorded. Dead trees were also identified and marked. A digital dashboard was also developed to visualise and track the data. Besides nearly 28,000 trees, 5,000 shrubs were also identified at this green corridor. The geotagging initiative involved precise identification of each tree using GPS-enabled surveying equipment. This structured dataset enabled spatial analysis, monitoring, and provided a critical decision-making tool for authorities, urban foresters and environmental planners. Strategically located, the Lahore Canal green belt functions as one of the city's primary ecological corridors — mitigating air pollution, regulating micro climate and enhancing urban biodiversity.